

Contributions.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF AND DUTIES IN CALIFORNIA.

MARTIN SHIVELY.

To one reared amidst eastern surroundings, and in a climate quite unlike that of the Pacific coast, it is to be expected that things would appear strange at first view. And though, taking all in all, the newer place may possess many advantages over the older, yet it will quite often suffer by the contrast in the mind of the superficial observer. Thus my first impressions of California, were by no means flattering to the state. Arriving here in the midst of the dry season, when no one expects rain nor wants any, the landscape was dead and barren indeed. The more sandy soil had been cut up by the heavy hauling, and so the public highways were anything but pleasant to drive over. And if the road chanced to lead one over the rich but heavy black soil called here "a-do-be" he would be almost choked with dust. No matter how well I shall yet think of this country, I shall always remember how thoroughly I disliked it at first. I looked in vain for some local reason why this was called the "golden state." I saw only dust and a barren landscape, and when a new acquaintance said that California had been more lied about than any state in the union, I quite agreed with him. Lest someone should think that I am still disgusted, I will only say now, that I am in process of being converted, and no doubt I shall be an enthusiastic Californian after a while. For the winter rains have come, and where all was barren sand before, is now a beautiful carpet of grass. The beautiful verdure of winter and the very mild weather cannot but be praised.

After two days of rest in the hospitable home of brother J. P. Wolf, the Annual Camp meeting of the Brethren Churches of California called us into the sowing and harvesting again. As has already been reported the meeting this year was held near Ripon, and about ten miles from Lathrop. Everything about the meeting was quite novel for awhile, for in this kind of work, I was also a "tender-foot." The services were held in a grove of oak trees; they were not large, and to people accustomed to the forests in the eastern states, it was hardly worthy of the name of "grove." Here, on the banks of the Itanislán river and among the largest of the trees, was pitched a large tent, capable of holding from 600 to 800 people, and in this the services were held. All round it were smaller tents which constituted the temporary homes of the people in attendance,—a sort of feast of Taber-

nacles, only the design was somewhat different. A little way from the principal tent, was a large structure, made of boards, muslin and clear sky which served as cook house and dining room. Here meals were served to the hungry at the regular hours, for about seven cents. Of course no one could expect an elaborate menu for that money, but an abundance of substantial food was furnished and there was no reason why any one should be hungry. The whole meeting was admirably managed by brethren J. P. and Ed Wolf, Ed. Reynolds, B. G. Frederick, John Gardiner and other able assistants.

The camp meeting, as I saw it, is not a gathering for mere pleasure,—its object is to worship God, and the days were well filled with Christian effort and Christian enjoyment. At 7 A. M. the day was begun with a devotional service lasting half an hour, after which came breakfast. At 10 A. M. a meeting for prayer and praise was held which was followed at 11 by preaching. After noon again there was a sermon, and also in the evening. In this manner were nine days spent, during which time I preached twenty-three sermons, and heard some very good ones by Brethren Beer, Wolf, Garman and Julius. A most enjoyable communion service was held near the close of the meeting.

Whatever objections may be urged against camp meeting in the eastern states, will not, I think, hold good here. I can and do, unhesitatingly give them my approval among the churches of California. Our people in this state are widely scattered, and many of them do not have the privilege of attending religious services among those of their own faith, except as they come to these meetings. To this service, they come from far and near, not a few driving almost a hundred miles to enjoy the privilege. The great majority remain throughout the meeting, and go home at its close, determined to hold out faithful until death calls them to reward. Who can measure the help they here receive? nor how much more closely and firmly they are bound into the body of Christ by the association and worship with their Brethren? To many, the camp meeting affords the only opportunity of the year, for engaging in the holy communion service. They come hungry for the Bread of Life and go away glad because of the good things they have here received. And then too, these meetings are the means of reaching many who would otherwise know comparatively little of the religion of Jesus Christ, and its claims upon them. For in this state, and especially in the rural districts there are few churches and few workers. Thus many have not the privilege of attending

religious services except as they go a long way to do so. The camp meeting is located with a view of reaching as many such people as possible. Thus the message of truth, of duty and of heaven is made known, and the Gospel seed thus sown will do its work unto life everlasting. The work is the Lord's, he will bless it here in California, and everywhere.

"DON'T PROPHECY UNLESS YOU KNOW."

D. C. MOOMAW.

This legend attracted my attention lately in a political paper, (which I read occasionally by way of parenthesis) and it set my thoughts to rambling to and fro. There is a depth of meaning in it which can be utilized profitably if we have a mind susceptible of growth.

The *weather prophet* is the most unanimous of all. He reads the sealed book of the future in the clouds, and in the winds, and in the deep blue sky, in the singing birds, and the piping, croaking frogs, in the morning's glow and the evening's halo, in the tintillation of the nerves and in the contraction or expansion of the muscles. All nature is a laboratory in which are compounded the sure augury of the unwritten and unrevealed future. A mistake or two does not weaken his faith in the occult science. One successful forecast in a hundred suffices to establish the utmost confidence in its reality.

The voice of *political prophet* is heard in the land. He knows what will come forth from the prolific matrix of this or that party. He can read the minds of those who would keep him from the public crib, and he points down the shadowy vistas of the future in glorification of the abounding patriotism of his party. Ruin, dire and sure, stalks like a cloud of ghosts in the bleak pathway of the other side, and its miasmatic fumes poison the fountain from whence flows the stream that fructifies the body politic. All this he avers and confirms it by voluble oaths in the name of all the gods in his political calendar.

It makes the smallest bit of difference to him if the facts of history falsify every prophesy. Into the gaping mouth of the credulous crowd he empties his over-flowing vial.

The *religious prophet* is in abundant evidence. He knows what will come to pass if his dogmas are disputed, and he knows that the wreck of all things mundane will follow the rejection of the prophecies.

It does not concern him at all if every page of history contradicts his assumptions. He is not troubled about the history of the past. It has no lessons for him. It